



Presentation

of Synodal Forum III

“Women in ministries and offices in the Church”

for the First Reading

at the Second Synodal Assembly (30 September - 2 October 2021)

for the action text

“Women at Theological Faculties,
Institutes and Church Universities” (draft file)

For many years, women have been indispensable in the theological faculties, institutes and Church Universities in Germany as students, doctoral candidates, post-doctoral candidates and professors. They head institutes and hold chairs, achieve significant advances in theological research, and thus contribute to the development and deepening of teaching. They train the pastoral workers and religious instructors of the future, and share in the official proclamation of Catholic doctrine in accordance with c. 747 CIC¹.

The contribution made by female scholars to the teaching of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel must be explicitly acknowledged. At the same time, there is still significant room for improvement in the representation of women in the professorships of Roman Catholic theological faculties, institutes and Church Universities.

The equality of women and men is a declared goal of (Church) Universities. A number of measures have been implemented in recent years to promote women’s academic careers and increase the number of their appointments. Pope Francis has urged theologians to examine and consolidate the “social and cultural meditation on the Gospel undertaken by the People of God [...] in dialogue with diverse cultures”. Such a mediatory task can only take place in our society with women, and if they are visible as theologians. That sufficient numbers of different women teach and carry out research in the various theological disciplines, and with dif-

¹ Cf. “Berufung von Professoren und Professorinnen der Katholischen Theologie. Normen - Vorgaben - Informationen” (2014) Die deutschen Bischöfe - Kommission für Wissenschaft und Kultur, No. 38. Online at: https://www.dbk-shop.de/media/files_public/3ec5298bfb36dfabfbf6087c53660710/DBK_1238.pdf.

ferent research approaches, is a fundamental prerequisite for a “wise and courageous renewal” of ecclesiastical studies, and calls for a “missionary transformation of a Church that “goes forth”.”². This “going forth” requires a broad commitment on the part of all concerned.

Different types of discrimination against female scholars can currently be observed all in all (e.g. the failure to take female life situations into account, such as dual burdens in terms of time and social responsibilities, restricted mobility, simultaneity of orientation towards career and family, etc.; marginalisation of women in male-dominated academic and church environments, such as minority status, lack of female role models, exclusion from traditional male groups, and thus from the informal distribution of resources, etc.). These generally play a role in academic settings, and are often reinforced by church contexts. The strength that is shown in care work is to be recognised, and church settings must help provide conditions or active support when female scholars share the care work equally with their partners or other individuals.

Gender equality measures have been established in the state university context and at Church Universities and institutes, but women remain markedly underrepresented from the doctoral phase onwards³. Diocesan leaders and heads of orders need to develop a more pronounced awareness of the need for greater equality measures in academic settings. They must use their influence to push for gender equality tools to be put to effective use (e.g. at meetings of bishops and faculties/church institutes: placing the representation of women on the agenda at all academic levels). Individuals with responsibility within the Church observe the equality measures, and facilitate the effective promotion of scholars, e.g. by supporting women in completing their doctorates and post-doctoral studies. Different instruments would be welcome, including scholarships, leaves of absence, support for internships and the like. The qualification phase for students of a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programme in Religious Education or of a Master’s degree programme in Catholic Religious Education has to be considered separately here. Most female graduates of these programmes currently have to obtain numerous post-graduate qualifications as part of their supplementary studies. Targeted support measures are also needed here from the German Bishops’ Conference (e.g. scholarship programmes for Master’s students, etc.).

Women’s studies and feminist theology must be given an appropriate place in the curricula and further study programmes of faculties and institutes, and especially in the context of priestly training and training in religious communities. It is precisely on this path that foundations are laid for gender awareness that will have an impact on pastoral practice.

Despite this urgent need for action in Germany, we know that the situation is even more difficult for many Catholics across the world. Women in some local churches have virtually no access to theological training and to academic qualifications, even when they themselves would very much like to have such opportunities. This not only excludes them from the Church’s decision-making processes, but also makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse of

² All quotes in this paragraph from: Pope Francis (2017): Apostolic Constitution “*Veritatis gaudium*” on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, para. 3. online at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20171208_veritatis-gaudium.html.

³ Emunds, Bernhard / Hagedorn, Jonas (2017): Zur Lage des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses in der deutschsprachigen Katholischen Theologie, Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften 58, 341-403.

power. For this reason, all stakeholders who bear responsibility for the international theological exchange in academic and ecclesial settings must be mindful of gender equality in their work (e.g. in awarding scholarships, writing reports, establishing international partnerships, etc.).

The Synodal Assembly is requested to resolve as follows:

1. A commission is to be established in the German Bishops' Conference, with the participation of the Committee of German Catholics, tasked with reporting annually on gender equality measures and the representation of women in theological faculties/Church institutes, evaluating developments, and communicating this to the public.
2. The (arch)dioceses are to allow women in the phases of doctoral studies and post-doctoral studies a (partial) temporary leave of absence from service (whilst continuing to pay their salaries). In addition, the (arch)dioceses are to make available the pastoral practice posts necessary for the recognition of post-doctoral studies, insofar as this is necessary and honorary activities cannot be appropriately recognised.
3. The German Bishops' Conference and the Committee of German Catholics are to seek to bring about a significant increase in the share of female scholars on their advisory bodies and commissions. They are also to take aspects of gender equality into account when calling on theological expertise from Universities.
4. The German Bishops' Conference and the *Katholisch-Theologischer Fakultätentag* (Association of Faculties of Catholic Theology) seek to draw up in mutual agreement a new regulation on the *nihil obstat* procedure in which discrimination against women is to be addressed. The goal is in particular to be to bring about a transparent procedural arrangement at the level of the administrative courts, including where the possibility exists that a teaching licence might be withdrawn. Forms of participation by women are to be introduced, at least in an advisory capacity.
5. The dioceses are to undertake to place financial support for doctoral studies by women from non-European countries on an equal footing with doctoral studies by priests.
6. The German Bishops' Conference and the individual dioceses are to have their theological scholarship programmes (e.g. "Albertus Magnus") evaluated with regard to gender equality. In particular, they are to have the impact of this programme on gender relations in the sending local churches examined. It is to seek to establish a proportion of at least 30 % of female scholarship holders in the funding programmes, and to make sure that the proportion of women in the selection committees is increased to at least 30 %. Together with the episcopal aid agencies, it is to remove the systemic obstacles that stand in the way of increasing the support provided to women from other local churches.
7. (Arch)dioceses are to consciously include women's studies and feminist theology in the study and further training programmes of pastoral staff (including training for priests and training in religious communities).